

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SONGS IN DEVELOPING THEIR VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to explore how students perceive the use of songs in developing their vocabulary achievement. Vocabulary was considered important for language acquisition, and songs were believed to provide contextualization, repetition, and fun learning. This quantitative study was conducted at the Education Training Course in Depok, Indonesia, with 25 students who were already familiar with learning through songs. A Likert-scale questionnaire was used to obtain students' perceptions, while a vocabulary test was used to assess their vocabulary achievement. The results showed positive perceptions, with a mean agreement of 84.32 out of 100. The results of the vocabulary test were also high, with 81% of questions answered correctly. A significant positive correlation was found between students' positive perceptions and their vocabulary performance ($\rho = 0.859$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicated that students held positive perceptions toward the use of the songs and that songs played a supportive role in developing their vocabulary achievement.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, Songs, Vocabulary Achievement

INTRODUCTION

People all over the world use English for various purposes, including education, business, technology, and global communication. Effective English communication is essential for people to compete in today's globalized society. Vocabulary mastery is one of the most important components of English proficiency. It is a key element in language learning and plays a crucial role in communication. A language cannot be fully mastered without a thorough understanding of vocabulary, which often changes depending on the context (Brown, 2007). In addition to pronunciation and grammar, vocabulary is essential for mastering the four primary language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Wahyudin et al., 2024). A strong vocabulary base is crucial for academic success in literature, linguistics, and translation (Afzal, 2019). Limited vocabulary hinders language proficiency, especially in English, which depends on a wide and varied vocabulary for effective communication (Harselina et al., 2024). Students with limited vocabulary often feel demotivated to engage in language learning (Nikmah & Rakhmawati, 2023) and struggle to express ideas clearly (Sari & Aminatun, 2021).

Given these challenges of vocabulary acquisition, especially for students with limited exposure to English, innovative and engaging teaching strategies are essential. One such method is the use of songs in language learning. Songs are engaging and support memory retention through their use of melody, rhythm, and repetition. Based on the writer's observations at Education Training Course in which the writer taught for six months, there were some students who used songs as a learning medium who outperformed their peers in vocabulary acquisition, despite being at the same proficiency level.

Several studies support the benefits of using songs in language learning. Songs provide repeated and contextualized exposure to new words (Guerrouf, 2022), foster a low-stress environment that encourages participation (Ejeng et al., 2020), and offer access to everyday language and natural pronunciation (Bsharat, 2021). Despite songs offering interesting input, how students perceive the use of songs in developing vocabulary achievement is unclear. This study aims to explore the students' perceptions of using songs to develop their vocabulary achievement.

Learning a new language requires continuous practice, meaningful exposure, and active engagement. Traditional methods, such as memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary lists, can feel repetitive and uninteresting. In contrast, songs offer a more engaging approach by combining melody, rhythm, and meaningful lyrics. A song is generally defined as a musical composition designed for vocal performance, combining lyrics and melody to express ideas or emotions. Cook (1998) defined it as a brief song that could be sung with or without instruments. Gioiaia (2019) highlighted its poetic nature, while Griffiee (1992) described it as a vocal and melodic composition that conveys meaning. Based on these definitions, songs are creative and adaptable forms of expression.

One of the best things about utilizing songs to learn a language is that they help students learn new words. Songs help students learn new words by putting them in context instead of just giving them as single words. This makes it easier for them to understand and remember what words mean. The music helps students remember words effortlessly, and the lyrics' repetition helps students remember words better (Parengkuan, 2021). Additionally, songs introduce students to real language, like idioms, slang, and cultural references that are not often found in textbooks. This exposure strengthens the connection between theoretical comprehension and practical language use (Wahidah et al., 2024).

Songs help students learn new words and improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation at the same time. Songs, as opposed to scripted learning materials, use natural speech patterns, like connected speech, intonations, and pronunciation variations. Listening to and singing songs can help students improve their pronunciation and listening skills (Kaswari et al., 2023). Songs also help with the emotional and psychological parts of learning a language. Many students get anxious when they have to speak a new language, which might slow down their progress. It has been demonstrated that music creates a joyful and calm learning environment, reduces stress, and encourages participation. Ejeng et al. (2020) said that songs help students get over their fear of making mistakes, which boosts their confidence and motivation. Based on those explanations, it can be concluded that songs are a beneficial language learning medium that goes beyond simple enjoyment. It improves pronunciation, increases vocabulary, exposes students to real language, and fosters an inspiring and joyful learning environment.

The collection of words used to express concepts and convey meaning in written and spoken communication is referred to as vocabulary (Inatia, 2022; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023). It forms the basis for vital abilities like speaking, listening, reading, and writing and is a basic component of language proficiency (Richards & Renandya, 2002). A strong vocabulary improves a person's ability to communicate by allowing them to express their ideas and feelings clearly (Harselina et al., 2024).

Vocabulary can be categorized into different types based on its usage and function in language acquisition and communication. According to Afzal (2019) and Schmitt (2000) vocabulary categorized into active (productive) and passive (receptive) types. Active vocabulary

includes words students use when speaking or writing, while passive vocabulary refers to words recognized when listening or reading.

In terms of grammatical function, vocabulary can be grouped into several word classes. For example, noun, which name people, places, objects, or concepts (e.g., dog, school, happiness); verbs, which indicates actions, or states (e.g., run, eat, sleep); adjectives, which describe qualities of nouns (e.g., beautiful, tall, quick); adverbs, which modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs (e.g., slowly, always, often); pronouns, which replace nouns (e.g., he, she, it); conjunctions, which connect words, phrases, or clauses (e.g., and, but, because) prepositions, which show relationships between words, often indicating location, direction, or time (e.g., at, on, in, through); modal auxiliaries, which precede the main verb to express abilities, possibilities, or obligations (e.g., can, could, may, might) (Anggaira et al., 2022; Harselina et al., 2024). Mastery of these categories is essential for students, as they form the structural foundation of communication.

Vocabulary itself plays a crucial role in communication, comprehension, and academic success. It provides individuals with the necessary tools to express their ideas, emotions, and opinions clearly and effectively (Inatia, 2022). A broad vocabulary allows for more relevant and engaging conversations by improving both written and oral communication (Wakary et al., 2023). Even with perfect grammar, having a limited vocabulary might make communicating challenging (Rashid et al., 2022). Furthermore, vocabulary is important for reading and listening comprehension because it allows students to draw meaning from context and understand complicated communication (Dong et al., 2020).

To summarize, vocabulary is an essential component of language ability, supporting important abilities such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students with a broad vocabulary are better able to communicate, connect meaningfully, and comprehend difficult materials and discussions. To improve overall language proficiency and academic success, vocabulary development should be given the highest priority in language education due to its critical role in communication and learning.

The depth and breadth of a student's vocabulary knowledge are represented in their vocabulary achievement, which is critical for language learning. Nation (2001) underlined that vocabulary knowledge is more than just memorizing; it also includes a student's ability to apply words effectively in a range of situations. Furthermore, Richards and Renandya (2002) emphasized the importance of vocabulary in terms of overall language proficiency, stating that vocabulary achievement demonstrates a student's ability to integrate new words into their existing vocabulary, which improves comprehension, communication, and expression skills. This integration is essential for success in critical language skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

In conclusion, vocabulary achievement is an important aspect of language development since it requires understanding words and utilizing them well in a variety of contexts. It is essential for students to develop broad language skills, communicate coherently, and perform well in essential skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Perception is how individuals interpret sensory input to understand their surroundings. Goldstein & Brockmole (2017) define it as processing sensory input to comprehend the environment, while Green et al. (2024) saw it as an active process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting data. Nanay (2024) added that perception helps structure and make sense of experiences. It is shaped by personal experiences, expectations, and prior knowledge (Baker, 2024; Sambrook et al., 2021), involving both external stimuli and internal cognition, resulting in varied individual interpretations.

According to Robbins & Judge (2024), perception can be positive or negative. Positive perceptions align with expectations and prior knowledge, while negative perceptions often stem from dissatisfaction or misunderstanding. These views affect attitudes and behaviors, including how students respond to the use of songs in developing their vocabulary achievement. Green et al. (2024, p 35) divided perception into three stages: selection, where students focus on specific song elements like lyrics or rhythm; organization, where they categorize and recognize patterns; and interpretation, where they assign meaning based on prior knowledge and culture. These stages illustrate how students develop perceptions of songs as facilitating strategies.

Students' views on using songs to learn vocabulary are influenced by a number of things, both inside and outside of school. Motivation, personal preferences, and past experiences with music-based learning are all internal factors that determine how willing someone is to use songs as a learning as way to learn (Walgito, 2004). Students' reactions to this way are also affected by things outside of the classroom, like the type of song, the cultural context, and the classroom environment.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to explore students' perceptions of songs in developing their vocabulary achievement. It was conducted at Education Training Course, located at H. Dul, Bojong Pondok Terong Street, Cipayung Subdistrict, Depok City, West Java, Indonesia, from 29 April 2025 to 9 May 2025 during the scheduled English course. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire and a vocabulary test, with 25 students from the children level as participants. The participants had previous experience in learning English and were familiar with using songs as a method to enhance vocabulary.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 items with five answer choices provided: Strongly Agree (SA) scored 5, Agree (A) scored 4, Neutral (N) scored 3, Disagree (D) scored 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) scored 1. For the vocabulary test, there were 25 multiple-choice items. The questionnaire was used to assess students' perceptions of how English songs affected their vocabulary achievement, and the vocabulary test was used to measure their vocabulary achievement.

The questionnaire was adopted from Bsharat (2021), Karim et al., (2022), and Virtaza et al. (2023). For the vocabulary test, the test was adopted from P. Nation (2007), Barton (2021), Webb et al., (2017), Grammar, (n.d), and GrammarBank, (2024) online exercises. Data from both instruments were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis began with descriptive statistics to provide an overview of students' perceptions and vocabulary achievement. Next, a correlation test was conducted to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of songs and their vocabulary achievement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Result of Students' Perceptions

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Persepective	25	72	98	84.32	9.397
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Based on the results of descriptive statistics, the average total score was 84.32 with a minimum score of 72 and a maximum score of 98, and a standard deviation of 9.397, which indicated that students generally agreed to strongly agreed on the use of songs in vocabulary learning. Thus, it was concluded that most students had a positive perception of the use of songs as a medium for learning English vocabulary. This finding was in line with a study conducted by Virtaza et al. (2023) which also showed that students had a positive perception of using songs for vocabulary development, with a percentage of 79,78%.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Result of Vocabulary Achievement

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary Achievement	25	13	25	20.32	4.670
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Based on the results of descriptive statistics, the mean score was 20.32 out of a maximum score of 25. This showed that, in general, students were able to answer about 81% of the questions correctly, indicating a relatively good level of vocabulary achievement.

Correlation Test

Since the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric statistical analysis was applied. The correlation analysis using Spearman's rho (ρ) was conducted to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of the use of songs and their vocabulary achievement. This test referred to the following guideline: if the significance value < 0.05 , a correlation or relationship existed. Meanwhile, if the significance value > 0.05 , indicated no correlation or relationship.

Table 3: Correlation Test Results of Students' Perception and Vocabulary Achievement Correlations

		Perspective	Vocabulary Achievement
Spearman's rho	Perspective	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	25
	Vocabulary Achievement	Correlation Coefficient	.859**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	25

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the results of correlation test, there was a strong positive correlation between students' perceptions and their vocabulary achievement, with a correlation coefficient (ρ) of 0.859. This correlation was statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p = 0.000$), indicating that students' perceptions were associated with their vocabulary achievement.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that students had a positive perception of the use of English songs in vocabulary learning. This was supported by the average perception score of 84.32 and the vocabulary test score of 20.32. A very strong positive correlation was found between perception and vocabulary achievement ($\rho = 0.859$), which meant that the more positive the students' perception, the higher their vocabulary achievement. Thus, English songs proved to be useful in helping students' vocabulary achievement and could be used as a fun and meaningful learning strategy.

It is advised that teachers use songs more often in vocabulary learning activities in accordance with these findings. Songs could have been used purposefully to introduce, reinforce, and review new vocabulary in ways that were interactive, contextual, and emotionally engaging for students. Songs should be viewed as providing valuable and significant linguistic that enhances vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and general language competency rather than just as entertainment. For future research, it is recommended to conduct a study with a larger and more varied sample and investigate the impact of different music genres on students' vocabulary achievement.

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